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ABSTRACT

Results of the University New Student Census and the Mini Census completed by 1,655 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), are presented. Half of the incoming freshmen were male and half were female, and 84 percent were White, 9 percent were Black, 5 percent were Asian American, and 3 percent were Hispanic. Important educational objectives were learning skills directly applicable to career goals (45 percent) and deciding on a career (19 percent). Thirty-three percent stated their primary reason for staying to complete a degree was to meet requirements for their chosen career, 25 percent persisted because they perceived that college graduates find better jobs, 7 percent believed that college graduates earn more money, and 20 percent felt that they must have the degree to enter graduate or professional school. Fifty-nine percent of the students related that UMCP was their first choice of schools. Information is also presented on: students' religious background, family characteristics, place of residence, educational background, living accommodations, expectations of college, attitudes toward college student concerns, personal philosophy, extracurricular activities, UMCP social responsibilities, and male-female differences. (SW)

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This study was done in cooperation with the Orientation Office, University of Maryland, College Park.

Computer time for this research was furnished by The Computer Science Center at the University of Maryland, College Park.

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SUMMARY

The University New Student Census (UNSC) and the Mini Census were completed by 1655 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP).

Fifty percent of the incoming freshmen were male, 50% were female. In terms of racial composition, 84% were white, 9% were black, 5% were Asian-American and 3% were Hispanic. When asked about their religious background, 31% stated they were Catholic, 26% were Jewish, and 22% were Protestant. Seventy-five percent spent most of their lives in a suburban location, 10% in the city, 10% in small towns, and 5% in rural areas.

In discussing their most important educational objective, 45% stated learning skills directly applicable to career goals, while 19% stated deciding upon a career. Thirty-three percent stated their primary reason for staying to complete graduation requirements was because a college degree was the only way by which their chosen career can be entered, 25% stated they would remain for the reason that college graduates get better jobs, 7% reported that college graduates earn more money and 20% stated that they must have the degree to enter graduate or professional school.

Fifty-nine percent of the students related that UMCP was their first choice of schools. Ninety-two percent expected college to be hard work. Eighty percent expected college to be fun and 87% expected there to be facilities and opportunities for creative activities on campus.

The University New Student Census (UNSC) and the Mini Census were completed by 1655 freshmen entering UMCP during summer orientation. Those freshmen participating in the two-day orientation (63%) completed the UNSC, while those participating in the one-day orientation (37%) were given the shorter version of the questionnaire, the Mini Census. This report is based on items either from the UNSC only or on items that were common to both the UNSC and the Mini Census. Since the sample sizes for the two groups were unequal, a weighting procedure was used on the common items, so that percentages reported are representative of all UMCP freshmen.*

Student Characteristics

This sample of freshmen was equally composed of males (50%) and females (50%). Eighty-four percent were white, 9% were black, 5% were Asian-American and were 3% Hispanic. In terms of religious affiliation, 31% identified themselves as Catholic, 26% were Jewish, and 22% were Protestant. Twelve percent stated that they belonged to a religious denomimation other than the ones mentioned, while 9% identified themselves as not belonging to any religious group.

The majority of the UMCP freshmen (75%) indicated that they have spent most of their life in the suburbs, 10% in a city, 10% in a small town and 5% indicated rural area or farm.

Living Accomodations

Eighty percent of the new freshmen indicated that they would be residing at a University residence hall during their first semester at UMCP. Seventeen percent stated that they would be living with family, i.e., parents, guardians or other relatives. Less than 3% reported that they would be sharing an off campus room, apartment or house, fewer than 2% stated that they would be living alone off campus, and less than 1% responded that they would be residing at a fraternity or sorority house.

Consistent with freshmen favoring campus housing is the fact that 68% disagreed with the statement "I prefer to commute rather than live on campus".

Family Background

When describing their parent's marital status, 79% stated they were currently living together, 14% were divorced, and 3% were separated. Two percent stated that their father was deceased, 1% stated their mother was deceased and less that 1% stated both parents were deceased. The average age for fathers was 44 years and for mothers, slightly older at 47 years.

In relation to their other siblings, 39% of the incoming freshmen were oldest, 34% were youngest, and 23% were middle children. Five percent were only children.

Seventy-three percent of the students stated that their immediate family was very close.* Despite this closeness, only 38% reported that their parents were a big influence in their decision to attend UMCP.* The same percentage (38%) expected their parents to attend the parent orientation program.*

Educational Background

When asked about their average grade in high school, 66% of the freshmen stated B, 23% stated A and 11% stated C. The students differed in terms of their perceived academic weaknesses. Twenty-five percent felt weakest in study habits, 22% in math, 14% in writing, 12% in science courses, 8% in reading, 8% in their ability to take exams, 6% in notetaking and 5% in other areas.

There was also variation among the students in their knowledge of computers. Sixteen percent strongly agreed with the statement "I know how to use a computer", 38% agreed, 18% felt neutral, 16% disagreed, and 12% strongly disagreed.

The freshmen were asked how many hours per week they devoted to studying, on the average, while in high school. The average (median) hours per week studied was 7, ranging from 3% who did not study at all to 2% who studied 31 or more hours per week.*

View of UMCP

The main reason that 36% of the freshmen decided to attend UMCP was because it offered the kind of academic program they wanted. Twenty-five percent attended because of geographic location, 14% attended because it was relatively inexpensive, and 10% attended because friends or relatives currently/formerly attend(ed). Only a small percentage decided to attend because a high school teacher or counselor suggested UMCP (2%), as well as for the reason that they were not accepted by another school (2%). Eleven percent of the students attended for reasons other than the ones provided.

A majority of the incoming freshmen stated that UMCP was their first choice in a school (59%)*, and, as of orientation, 53% already felt part of the student body.

College Expectations

The new freshmen had both realistic expectations of the academic demands ahead, as well as optimism about being able to succeed. Ninety-two percent of those sampled expected college to be hard work* and 88% expected to be able to maintain a B average in their college studies.*

When asked how many hours per week they expected to study, the average (median) response given was 18, with with a range of 1% expecting to study 4 - 5 hours per week to 6% expecting to study 31 or more hours per week.*

In spite of the expectations of hard work, 80% of the new students expected college to be a lot of fun* and 87% expected ample facilities/opportunities for creative activities on campus.*

Work Plans

In addition to academics and extracurricular activities, many of the new freshmen indicated that they would be working part-time. Twenty-nine percent of the freshmen stated that they did not have a part-time job, but hoped to find one. In terms of those students who expressed having specific work plans, the average (median) number of hours per week that they expected to work was 15. The responses on this item ranged from 5% who planned to work 1 -9 hours per week to 1% who planned to work 40 or more hours per week. Forty-two percent of the students did not have a part-time job and did not plan to work.

In terms of their approximate weekly income from the part-time job, the median expected income was $58, ranging from 2% responding less than $20 per week to 2% responding more than $140 per week.

Career Goals

Almost half of the freshmen felt certain of the career paths they would pursue; 39% felt quite certain of their vocational goals while 10% stated that they had clearly fixed

vocational goals. Thirty-one percent felt somewhat uncertain, 7% felt quite uncertain, while 13% stated that they had no specific vocational goal at present.*

The freshmen had decided upon their present vocational goals as follows: after graduation from high school (4%), senior year (31%), junior year (24%), sophomore year (7%), freshman year (2%), and 8% stated before freshman year of high school. Twenty-four percent of the students responded that they have not yet decided.

The incoming freshmen were asked to select the most important factor in making a long-term career choice. They responded in the following way: high anticipated earnings (21%), intrinsic interest in the field (17%), rapid career advancement possible (13%), well respected or prestigious occupation (13%), can make an important contribution to society (9%), job openings generally available (8%), being able to work with people (8%), great deal of independence (5%), can avoid pressure (1%), and can work with issues (1%). Four percent stated other factors were most important.*

Students were also asked to list three occupations that are current vocational goals. These three occupations were classified according to Holland's (1970) model of career types. Holland's model assumes that there are 6 personality types and these "types" fit best into certain work environments. These career types include Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional individuals. The percentages of students who were classified into the various career types are presented

in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentages of Different Career Types

	R	I	A	S	E	C
1st choice	21%	35%	8%	8%	28%	0%
2nd choice	12%	37%	10%	12%	28%	2%
3rd choice	11%	29%	11%	15%	31%	2%

As reported in the above table, students most frequently chose Investigative occupations (35%) as their 1st choice, followed by Enterprising (28%), Realistic (21%), Artistic and Social (both 8%), and Conventional (0%). The popularity of Investigatiave occupations remained constant across 2nd (37%) and 3rd (29%) choices.

Attitudes Toward College

The new students varied in terms of what they hoped to accomplish at UMCP. When asked about their most important educational objective, many students demonstrated concern about careers. Forty-five percent stated learning skills directly applicable to career goals and 19% stated deciding upon a career. Other goals included becoming independent in thinking and behavior (14%), learning to write better (5%), improving self-understanding (5%), learning to take a stand

on things (4%), and learning to speak better (2%).

The freshmen were told that approximately 50% of university students typically leave before receiving a degree. They were asked, should this happen to them personally, what would be the most likely reason? The most popular reason for leaving was to enter another school (41%). Other reasons were the cost being more than either the student or family could afford (5%), disinterest in study (3%), and lack of academic ability (3%).* Twenty-nine percent indicated that they were absolutely certain that they would obtain a degree.

They were also asked, should they remain at the University and complete graduation requirements, what would be the most likely reason? Again the concern with career is apparent. Thirty-three percent responded that a college degree is the only way by which their chosen career can be entered and 25% stated that college graduates get better jobs. Twenty percent stated that they must have a degree to enter graduate or professional school and 7% reported that college graduates earn more money. Other reasons were the opportunity to meet and know many new and different people (4%), parents/relatives expected it (2%), and experience gained from extracurricular activities (1%).

For most of these students, the possibility of dropping out of school temporarily, before completing the bachelors degree, seemed quite remote. Only 3% agreed with the statement that chances are good that they may drop out temporarily, prior to the completion of their bachelors

degree.

Student Concerns

The new freshmen differed in what they believed would be the hardest part of adjusting to college. While students indicated, in a previously discussed item, that they expected to be able to perform satisfactorily in their studies, 29% were most concerned with being able to study efficiently. Seventeen percent felt that the most difficult aspect of adjusting to school would be selecting a field of study or career, further emphasizing the importance of career issues among the new freshmen. Eleven percent thought the hardest adjustment would be earning satisfactory grades, 7% thought it would be meeting financial expenses, 5% thought it was becoming a more critical and independent thinker, and 4% thought it was deciding whether (or how much) to get involved in campus issues.

Students were asked about their interest in seeking counseling. Seventy-eight percent expressed interest in counseling regarding educational/vocational concerns. Only 13% expressed interest in counseling regarding family conflicts, while even fewer (11%) showed interest in seeking counseling regarding emotional/social concerns.

Personal Philosophy

Freshmen most frequently attributed social life (28%) as

having the greatest influence on their personal development in the past year. Eighteen percent said job experience contributed most to their development in the previous year, while 17% said friendships. Eleven percent said coursework, 7% said contact with teacher(s) or counselor(s), 7% said individual or independent research or study, 4% said work with social/political action groups, and 2% said work with groups not involved in social/political action. Six percent of the freshment listed other influences as contributing most to their development.

In discussing their political position, 38% of the students described themselves as Middle-of-road. Twenty-four percent said they were Liberal and 23% said they were Conservative. A much smaller percentage of the freshmen considered themselves on the more extreme ends of the political continuum. Two percent described themselves as being Left, 1% said they were Far Right in their political views, and 1% said they were they were Far Left. Five percent of the students considered themselves completely apolitical and 7% said they held political positions other than the ones listed above.*

In addition to their political viewpoints, students reported how adequate they felt their personal philosophy or religious faith was, as a guide for their outlook and behavior. Forty-one percent stated their philosophy or religious faith was fairly adequate, 30% said it was very adequate, 6% said it was fairly inadequate, 5% felt it was very inadequate and 18% did not know if their philosophy or

religious faith was adequate.

The freshmen discussed how often they attended religious services in the last year. They varied greatly in terms of the number of services they attended. The two largest groups responded: once or twice, such as on religious holidays (27%), and generally weekly (22%). Sixteen percent said 3 - 7 times, 11% said weekly or more often, 10% said 8 - 12 times (up to monthly), and 14% said not at all.

When it came to discussing the issues that freshmen thought were most important for society to resolve, 28% felt crime and violence were most critical, 18% said it was the economy, 14% said militarism, 11% said racism, 8% said ecology/pollution, 7% said integrity of those with power, and 6% said drug abuse. One percent responded that sexism was the most important issue for society to resolve, while less than 1% listed tax reform.

The new freshmen were asked to respond to the following question: "What do you think is the best way for the State to provide higher educational facilities for physically handicapped students?" The overwhelming majority of freshmen felt all State campuses should be made accessible to the physically handicapped. Seventy-six percent favored having well developed special facilities and services on all campuses. In contrast, only 15% favored having well developed special facilities and services at one particular campus. Three percent favored having minimal special facilities and services at all campuses, 3% endorsed sending handicapped students to specially equipped out-of-state

schools at state tuition costs and 1% espoused doing nothing in particular.

UMCP Social Responsibilities

The freshmen were asked to respond to a number of statements regarding UMCP's responsibilities, both to special student groups and to society as a whole. In response to a question regarding the University's policies toward the active recruitment of minority and international students, the freshmen were more frequently in favor of the active recruitment of international students (36%), then they were of the active recruitment of blacks (27%) or Hispanics (23%).*

More the half of the freshmen (51%) were in favor of the University using its influence to improve social conditions in the State.

Extracurricular Activities

Thirty-two percent of the incoming freshmen stated that intramural or intercollegiate athletics was the type of extracurricular activity that was of greatest interest to them. Twenty-eight percent stated that special interest groups (sports, games, hobbies, etc.) were of greatest interest. Twelve percent stated that musical or dramatic organizations were of greatest interest, and 10% stated student publications/communications were of greatest

interest. Other extracurricular activities that students found of greatest interest were departmental subject matter clubs (5%), religious groups (3%), political and social action groups, i.e., MaryPIRG, political parties (3%), and volunteer services on or off campus (2%).

Related to the above, 55% of the students agreed with the statement "I expect to participate in some form of intramural athletics at the University".*

Honors Program

The freshmen were also asked about their relationship to the General Honors Program. Thirteen percent of the new freshmen replied that they were enrolled in the program. Four percent said they applied to the program, 41% said they were not a member and did not intend to apply and 16% said they never heard of the General Honors Program.

Sex Differences

Across many of the items, differences emerged between male and female students. Males and females responded differently to the question "What is the main reason you decided to attend UMCP". Males were more likely to attend UMCP because attendance at other schools was unfeasible, either due to academic or financial limitations, they were not accepted elsewhere, and because UMCP was relatively

inexpensive. Females more often reported that they attended because high school counselors/teachers suggested UMCP, they preferred the geographic location, and that friends/relatives attend.

Males and females had different perceptions of their academic weaknesses. Females felt weakest in math, science and taking exams, while males felt weakest in writing and study habits.

Male students more often reported that the hardest part of adjusting to college would be earning satisfactory grades. Females more frequently stated that the hardest part of adjusting would be becoming a more critical, independent thinker, meeting financial expenses, and selecting a field of study and/or career.

In terms of their most likely reason for leaving college, males more frequently stated because of disinterest in study, lack of academic ability and insufficient reading or study skills. Females more often stated that they were more likely to leave to get married or that they were absolutely certain that they would obtain a degree. When asked why they would remain and meet graduation requirements, females more often answered to meet people, while males were more likely to remain so that they could earn more money.

Females were more interested in educational/vocational counseling than their male counterparts, had higher hopes for an array of facilities and opportunities for individual creative activities on campus, had higher expectations that college would be fun, and rated themselves closer with their

immediate families.

Male students rated themselves higher in knowing how to use a computer, stated they were more likely to drop out of school temporarily before completing the bachelor's degree, had greater expectations of participating in intramural athletics and were more likely than female students to prefer commuting over living on campus.

References

Holland, J.L. The Self-Directed Search: A guide to educational and vocational planning. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1970.

*Weighted items common to both the UNSC and Mini Census

Throughout this study, percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or not all response categories being reported.